

BURGLARY AND DNA

A Vision for Ending the Recidivism

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Kentuckians lost more than \$150 million last year when thieves ravaged their homes and businesses, plundering their belongings.

More than 29,000 burglary cases were reported in the commonwealth in 2010. According to the Kentucky State Police Crime in Kentucky report, citizens reported 74,185 other thefts ranging from shoplifting and purse snatching to livestock and farm machinery thefts.

Burglars struck last year every 18 minutes, the report shows. Only about 15 percent of these crimes were solved.

DNA in burglary cases typically is not a leading investigative tool. KSP Central Forensic Laboratory Supervisor Whitney Collins said burglaries and other theft cases comprise about 30 percent of the lab's case load. Because of the severity of violent crimes, property crime DNA that is submitted to the lab takes a back seat to any murder, assault, or other violent crimes, according to statute. Turnaround time for DNA results in property crime cases is about nine months to one year, Collins said.

Yet, while they may be a small percentage of those analyzed, the DNA submitted is showing results.

"Burglaries are processed regularly," said Stacy Warnecke, KSP lab DNA

database supervisor. Of the almost 250 hits reported this year, 75 of those were to burglary cases. Unsolved burglaries are being worked and put into CODIS."

Several years ago in New York City, law enforcement began to evaluate the ways in which DNA could impact how property crimes were investigated. Through grant funding, the Biotracks program was initiated. It didn't take long for their vision of solving more crime to become a reality.

"Years ago, burglaries were a criminal report that a victim would report to the police, and the police, more times than not in New York and throughout the country today, would take that report, file it, and tell the homeowner to call their insurance company, that it was covered under homeowners," said retired New York City Police Detective Sgt. Joe Blozis. "In New York, we had a vision that [burglary]'s a serious crime. It's an invasion of privacy. We began to treat our burglary scenes as if they were crime scenes."

Investigators began to link crime scenes and saw the power of using DNA as an investigative tool.

"We solved no-suspect cases that basically would have been lying in some file cabinet, 'case closed — insurance company,'" Blozis said. "We also looked